

Sept 3, 1977

Dear Wilson gang,

I'm at work and it's one of those very rare quiet moments. So I thought I'd get a note off to you. I don't have any of your previous correspondence with me, so I'll just ramble on and hope I remember to answer any questions you may have presented over the last year.

I really must apologize for being such a delinquent letter writer. I don't think I've written since before Zack was born. Nothing against Zack or anything like that. I'm just my usual busy self. I really have appreciated the pictures. And I'd appreciate any recent ones that you have of the whole family. I'm making a special "Wilson" book.

What can I tell you? I've been very healthy and happy. Spending a lot of time outdoors - pulling weeds, cutting grass, and raising flowers with varying degrees of success. I've got myself an Olympus OM-1 35 mm camera and so I've put a lot of time into photographing the flowers - both at home and out in the desert. Some have turned out well enough to enlarge, mount, frame and give



as gifts. I'm feeling a real need to take some classes before I use up too much more film. Now! What an expensive hobby!

Fifi came down to San Diego in May and we had 3 wonderful days together. She's as wack-o as ever. She fell in love with Bruce, an RN who works at Scripps with me. He may be moving to northern California within the year and is thinking of seeking a job in El Camino's E.R. I'd just love it if they (Fifi + Bruce) could get together.

I had to make an emergency trip to Baltimore in April. My Aunt Grace, of whom you may have heard me speak, was murdered. Some crazy, who had helped her out a few months prior, when she slipped on the ice & broke her arm, had been dropping<sup>in</sup> to see her and talk from time to time. Grace apparently didn't care very much for him (she had told my mother that he was "peculiar".) but felt obligated to be nice to him because of his previous kindness. He was there at Grace's place one night when Grace's sister phoned. Grace told her sister that she'd call back as soon as he left. Grace never called back. She was found the next day bound and gagged in a pool of blood, having



been beaten and finally strangled to death. It was so ghastly that the family was really wrecked.

I was proud of my own immediate family. My mother was very brave - she and my youngest brother made funeral arrangements; my oldest brother handled the reading of the will; and I had the privilege of eulogizing my aunt at the funeral.

In other areas I've been busier than usual. Anita Bryant's successful campaign in Dade County, Florida has brought me out of semi retirement and back into full swing and much broader visibility as a gay liberationist. In May I was elected chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Gay Center for Social Services. In that role I'm working very hard on developing multifaceted funding and some long range plans for expansion of programs and facilities.

Early June brought the election in Dade County, Fla, which triggered an unprecedented wave of reaction in Calif. - not only new legislation (repressive, of course) in Sacramento - but also a flood of gay people coming out of their closets and looking for a place to direct their energies. Even though the Gay Center is apolitical by charter, we still have to deal with that kind of community energy and spirit because we are the most visible gay organization in San Diego. So community organizing resulted in the formation of the "San Diego Coalition for Gay Rights" that now has a large membership and is raising funds for coordinating a state-wide public education program in cooperation with similar organizations throughout the state.

On the other hand, the day after the Dade County



election, the Gay Center received 167 crank/obscene phone calls compared with a daily average of 2-3. Further, a new group calling itself "Enough is Enough" held a well-attended press conference to announce it's plans to "expose" politicians who had accepted gay support, to identify and ferret out gay people in government, the judiciary, law enforcement, and the teaching profession, etc, etc. etc. A real witch hunt!

So we held press conferences of our own --- radio and T.V. talk shows followed. Our efforts at City Hall - even quiet chats with friendly Councilpersons - were televised. I was on the news 3 or 4 times in one week. It really got zaney.

Just before all that we had our annual Gay Pride Parade which drew 2000 marchers and was followed by a 4-hour rally in Balboa Park. I was Grand Marshall of the parade and the first speaker. The crowd was very excited and interrupted my speech every few lines with wild cheering and applause. What started out as a 3-minute talk took nearly 7 minutes, due to audience reaction. At one point the crowd of 2000 plus rose to their feet, the band started playing, and people actually danced and hugged one another. I was never so jazzed in my life!

So much for singing and dancing. The rest has been hard work and will continue to be for some time. But now we have a great deal more people involved than ever before. Anita has really united the



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gay movement.

My car has been interesting lately. I keep wondering what's next. Last December the head gasket sprung a leak; water in the engine makes a weird noise! While the engine was torn apart it was discovered that a valve job was in order - \$200. Not too bad at 70,000 miles. At 81,000 same old thing; water in the oil, blowing oil out the exhaust, engine full of rust, needs ring job. It was cheaper to get a used 1975 engine - mine's a 1973 - \$600 installed. That was July.

Last week the radiator developed a leak. The engine heated up at midnight on the freeway. I stopped immediately and lifted the hood to see if I could see anything. I couldn't. So I let the hood down gently and got back in the car for a flash light. There was no flash light, so in frustration I just sat and read a book while waiting for the damned thing to cool off. After 20-30 minutes temperature was out of the danger zone, so I started up and drove off slowly forgetting that I hadn't latched the hood. At 30-35 mph the hood flew up, bent badly, sprung the hinges and damaged the windshield wipers and metal panel in front of the windshield.

Then the hood wouldn't latch even with a lot of angry threats from the owner. I really had to limp slowly to nearest service station for water, stop leak, and a rope to tie everything back together. Insurance will pay for the damage, <sup>(#228)</sup> but the whole thing needs painting. The extra cost to me will be about \$200.



So I keep saying to myself, "What else can go wrong?"

I got myself a dog - a 3-year-old German Shepherd - magnificent! Friendly, affectionate. Unfortunately my roommate's Border Collie took an instant and intense dislike for Caesar. They got into the most horrendous fight in which Caesar got Septimus (the Border Collie) by the throat and wouldn't let go. I'm sure he'd have killed Septimus in a few minutes if Gary and I hadn't intervened. I had to choke Caesar until he couldn't breathe before he'd let go. So after 6 weeks of keeping Caesar in the house and Septimus in the back yard and being ankle deep in hair (if I didn't vacuum daily) I gave Caesar to a friend. Broke my heart.

Sorry that you folks move around so much that I didn't get a chance to visit you in Jersey. Now, if you can just stay put for a while, I'd like to visit you ~~the~~ <sup>during</sup> Thanksgiving week. I've requested my vacation for Nov 20-29 and would be delighted to spend a few days with you if that suits your schedule. If that presents any conflict just let me know and I'll never speak to you again.



Seriously, you know what an understanding person  
I am.

Time is up. Please forgive me for the long  
silence.

Love and hugs,

Jess